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STATE FOR NEA A/S WELCH AND L A/S BELINGER
NEA ALSO FOR GCRETZ AND NEA/MAG:MNARDI
DRL:KMCGEENEY, S/WCI:ARICCI
DEFENSE FOR DOD/OSD:ALIOTTA
JUSTICE FOR DOJ/ODAG:MSTRANSKY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KDRG](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: FM SAYS ACCESS TO FORMER GUANTANAMO DETAINEES NOT
POSSIBLE

REF: A. STATE 103775
[B. TUNIS 1052](#)
[C. SECTO 8](#)

Classified By: Amb. Robert F. Godec, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) During an October 18 call on Foreign Minister Abdallah, the Ambassador asked the Minister whether the GOT would provide the Embassy access to the two Guantanamo detainees returned last year. Abdallah replied that he had explained honestly the GOT point of view to NEA A/S Welch (ref. a), and that it is very difficult to find a solution. The Minister said that during the conversation in New York it had been agreed that each side would reflect on the situation. Abdallah said he did not know how the GOT could provide access, given that Tunisian law clearly prohibits it. Abdallah added that a "discreet" visit would be pointless since the purpose would be to assuage NGO's and the press, and thus would be made public. There is thus no value in a secret visit.

[1](#)2. (S) Abdallah then told the Ambassador that there should be no concern about the treatment of detainees repatriated to Tunisia. The FM noted that President Ben Ali had personally promised that there would be no mistreatment. Abdallah added that he was making the same promise. There would be no mistreatment since there is no reason for it. Reprising comments Ben Ali made to the Secretary, Abdallah said that in fact the GOT would be prepared to give the detainees amnesty except for the fact that they were terrorists.

[1](#)3. (S) The Ambassador emphasized the importance that the highest levels of the US Government place on this issue, as was conveyed by the Secretary during her meeting with President Ben Ali. There are more detainees that the USG would like to return to Tunisia. Access to the two detainees returned last year would help us resolve our concerns and proceed. The Ambassador said that if the Foreign Minister was saying that President Ben Ali has decided a visit is not possible, then he would so report to Washington. At that point Abdallah, who had avoided saying whether he had discussed the issue with Ben Ali since meeting with A/S Welch in New York, said that he would raise the issue with the President "again". Abdallah then repeated his view that there is nothing that could be done.

[1](#)4. (S) Comment: It is not clear that Abdallah had in fact raised the access question with Ben Ali since returning from New York. Whether he will actually raise it with Ben Ali as a result of this conversation is also not certain. More positively, we note the Foreign Minister's reiteration of the

commitment from President Ben Ali that there will be no mistreatment of returned detainees. We believe there are several options on next steps in this matter, and we will provide our views to the Department soon. End Comment.
GODEC